

FWIS 176:

WRITING WITH AND ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

Course Information

Method: Online

Date/Time: MWF 9:45-10:50

Instructor: Baird Campbell

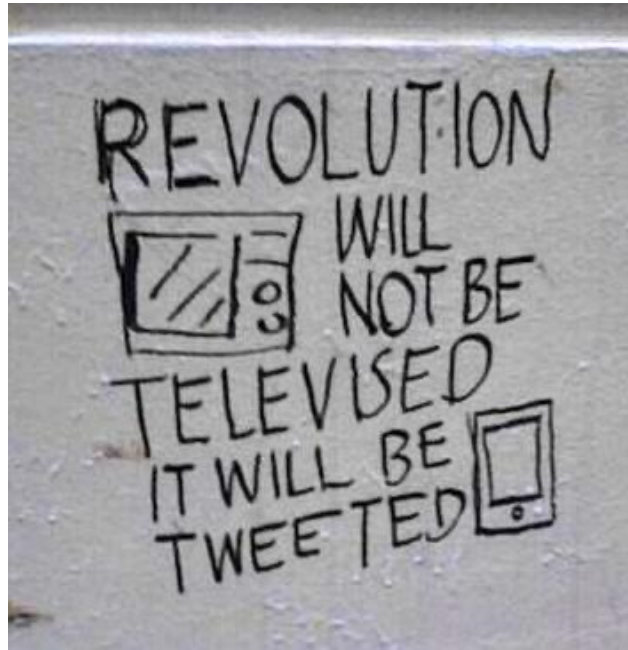
Email: baird@rice.edu

Office Hours: Wed 1-3

Sign up for a slot at:

<https://bit.ly/3q6xNb5>

I am also available outside of office hours by appointment.



Required Texts

***The Breakup 2.0:
disconnecting over new
media***

by Ilana Gershon

Available in the campus bookstore and online

Students will benefit from having access to Netflix and Hulu. If you do not have access, please let me know so we can get you access.

Course Description

Social media is everywhere. From social justice hashtags like #BLM and #MeToo, to the market power of popular TikTokers, to the sometimes earth-shaking tweets from the President of the United States, whether we like it or not, social media is part of our everyday lives.

In this course, we will explore social media from a number of perspectives: we will learn its history; explore its technicalities; think critically about its content; and ultimately seek to understand why and how social media has quickly become a mainstream tool for written and audiovisual communication.

The course is divided into 4 units:

1. The Theory, Study, and Ethics of Social Media
2. Identity on Social Media
3. Navigating Relationships Online
4. Social Media as a Tool for Activism

What is a FWIS Course?

First-year Writing Intensive Seminar (FWIS) courses fulfill Rice's Writing and Communication Requirement, which all students must complete in order to earn a bachelor's degree from the university. They are capped at 15 students to support group discussion and foster relationships between students and faculty, and also to ensure that students receive substantive feedback from instructors on their writing, speaking, and visual communication.

Student Learning Goals

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Critically analyze an academic text, identifying main arguments and supporting evidence
2. Produce an argumentative text with scholarly supporting evidence
3. Engage in ethnographic research both on- and offline
4. Describe and analyze the relationship between on- and offline identity
5. Identify and replicate the key components of ethnographic writing
6. Coherently and effectively express a scholarly argument orally
7. Think critically about social media as both a part of everyday life and as a scholarly tool



ASSIGNMENTS

Participation - 20%

Participation is more than just speaking up in class. It means doing all the reading, completing all assignments, being a generous and thoughtful peer reviewer, and coming to office hours. **All students are expected to come to office hours at least twice: once in the first half of the semester, and once in the second.**

Know Your Meme Presentation - 5%

Each student will give a 5-minute presentation on the history and impact on a meme of their choice. More instructions will be given in class.

Multimedia Class Reading Diary - 15%

Each student will be responsible for producing and uploading one video, one tweet, and one meme summarizing class readings. More instructions will be given in class.

Guided Social Media Ethnography - 5%

In this activity, I will guide you through the steps of doing social media research, and you will write up the results ethnographically.

Field Notes - 10%

You will be responsible for taking weekly field notes on your topic of choice throughout the semester. At several times during the semester, you will be asked to share them with the class and/or turn them in.

Ethnography Drafts - 10%

These are your first forays into ethnographic writing. Each draft will build on the previous one, and will be graded on improvement from one version to the next. The best two grades will be kept.

Grading

Participation - 20%
 Know Your Meme Presentation - 5%
 Multimedia Class Reading Diary - 15%
 Guided Social Media Ethnography - 5%
 Field Notes - 10%
 Ethnography Drafts - 10%
 Final Paper Abstract - 5%
 Final Presentation - 10%
 Final Paper - 20%

A: 94-100, A-: 90-93
 B+: 87-89, B: 84-86, B-: 80-83
 C+: 77-79, C: 74-76, C-: 70-73
 D+: 67-69, D: 64-66, D-: 60-63
 F/I: 59 and lower

Academic Accommodations

I am committed to making our virtual classroom an accessible space for all.

If you have a disability or other condition that may affect academic performance:

- make sure this documentation is on file with the Disability Resource Center (Allen Center, Room 111 / adarice@rice.edu / x5841) to determine the accommodations you need
- speak with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Important: Sometimes we need accommodations that fall outside the framework of disability as understood by the DRC. Please do not hesitate to let me know about any additional help you may need.

Need Help with Class?

CAPC (Center for Academic and Professional Communication)

Currently doing consultations via Zoom. You can book an appointment with a writing consultant online.

The Reference Desk

Any of the librarians at the Reference Desk will be helpful, but Joe Goetz (jgoetz@rice.edu) is the dedicated librarian for anthropology, and loves to help students!

Digital Media Commons

The staff at the DMC can help you with audiovisual assignments, and can also provide you with any equipment you may need. Located in the Fondren basement.

Need Other Help?

Office Hours

It is perfectly acceptable to make an office hours appointment to talk about your struggles with the class that go beyond the content. Please reach out, and if I can, I will help you find a solution. Sign up for a slot here:

<https://bit.ly/3q6xNb5>

Counseling Services

To help you manage course work, deadlines, personal and professional relationships and being away from home and/or family matters, the Rice Counseling Center (RCC) offers free, confidential support.

A more complete list is available under **"On Campus Resources"** on Canvas.

Final Paper Proposal/Abstract - 5%

You will produce a 250-word final paper proposal, in the form of an abstract, to be peer edited in class and included in your final paper

Final Presentation - 15%

At the end of the semester you will give a 10 minute presentation about your final paper topic. This presentation should communicate the main arguments of your paper, necessary background information, methods, and ethical considerations you encountered.

Final Paper - 20%

The final paper is the culmination of your work throughout the semester. It should incorporate what you have learned about ethnographic writing, and how it can be used to make a cogent argument. It should rely on sources from both the syllabus and independent research. The final paper will also be graded in relation to your drafts throughout the semester, and your ability to implement feedback from your classmates and from me.

Formatting Your Work

All written work should be formatted as follows:

Font - Times New Roman

Size - 12

Margins - 1 inch all around

Page Numbers

In top left corner:

-Name

-Date

-Course

All work should be spellchecked, proofread, and have a meaningful title.

Resubmission Policy

You may resubmit any one written assignment for a higher grade. You must resubmit this assignment to me within two weeks of the original due date.

Additionally, you must:

Meet with me

Meet with a CAPC writing consultant

Office Hours

Attending office hours is one of the easiest things you can do to guarantee your success in any course. To help get you into this habit, I require students to attend office hours at least twice throughout the semester.

At least one of these appointments must take place before March 14th.

Reasons to go to office hours include:

To discuss something you found interesting

To discuss something you found confusing

To work on improving a particular assignment

To get to know your instructor

Please do not hesitate to let me know about any additional help you may need.

Attendance

Showing up to class is the single biggest factor in determining your success. However, I understand that life happens, and sometimes absences are not avoidable. You may miss three (3) classes without penalty. After this, each missed class will result in a deduction of your final grade by a third of a letter grade.

- If you miss a class, you must find out what you missed from a classmate and come to the next class prepared.
- Tardiness of more than 15 minutes is considered an absence.

School-sanctioned absences: Students who anticipate multiple school-sanctioned absences should make every effort to be present in class when they are able. It is each student's responsibility to inform the instructor of planned absences as soon as possible, and communicate with classmates to catch up on the content they missed.

Late Work

Missing a deadline is a stressful experience. Sometimes it's just the result of a one-off timing issue, but sometimes it's the result of something more persistent—struggling with the material, life circumstances, mental state. Students in this situation often blame themselves and feel like they could complete the assignment if they had one more day, but the next day might not be any easier, and the stress snowballs as late penalties accumulate. Students sometimes fail classes because they get trapped in this cycle and ultimately never submit the assignment.

1. Email me whatever you have before the deadline. If I get something from you, no matter how incomplete, I can help you get unstuck.
2. Schedule an appointment with me ASAP.
3. Stay in contact with me until you finish. We will make a plan to get you back on track.

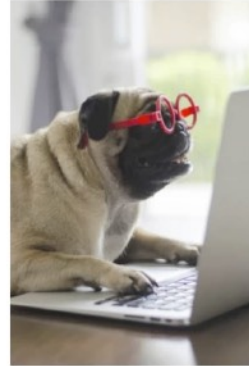
Zoom Policies

We are currently experiencing an unprecedented situation in higher education, and there are many questions still unanswered. What we do know is that multiple forms of communication and input improve everyone's experience.

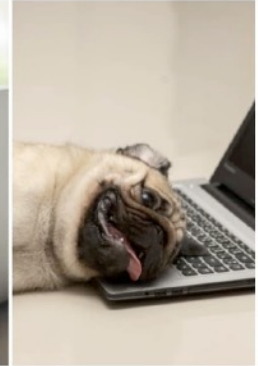
That being said, this situation has also reminded us of the unequal distribution of resources like computers, smart phones, and high speed Internet.

As such, I ask that all students who are able to attend class with their **cameras on** do so, understanding that this may not be possible for everyone all the time. If you are having issues with connectivity—especially if they are affecting your ability to participate fully in class—please let me know as soon as possible and we can troubleshoot.

Zoom meeting,
with video



Zoom meeting,
audio only



Class Expectations

Students will arrive on time and be prepared for the day's activities. This means:

- All assigned reading has been read, key terms defined, and questions prepared, and authors researched
- All assignments have been turned in according to instructions
- Multimedia Diary submissions have been viewed

Students will treat each other, the instructor, and guest speakers with respect. This means:

- Following class-defined norms governing class interactions
- Valuing the time of both the instructor and your classmates (arriving on time, meeting deadlines, etc.)



Rice Honor Code

In this course, all students will be held to the standards of the Rice Honor Code, a code that you pledged to honor when you matriculated at this institution. If you are unfamiliar with the details of this code and how it is administered, you should consult the Honor System Handbook at:

<http://honor.rice.edu/honor-systemhandbook/>.

This handbook outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This syllabus is a guideline for this course. As such, I reserve the right to make changes in it as necessary. All changes to the syllabus will be announced in class and on Canvas.

Week 1	In Class	Reading/Assignment
	Unit 1: The Theory, Study, and Ethics of Social Media	
January 25, 2021 How can I guarantee my success in this course?	• Welcome • Introductions • Syllabus Review • Academic communication norms	"How to Email Your Professor..." by Laura Portwood-Stacer Getting to Know You Survey due Jan 26 by 11:59 PM
January 27, 2021 What is social media and for whom? What can it tell us?	• Collaborative class norms • Discussion of reading	"Dialectics of Complexity: A Five-Country Examination of Lived Experiences on Social Media." by Gina M. Masullo, Martin J. Riedl, Ori Tenenboim Professional email due to baird@rice.edu by Jan 28 by 11:59
January 29, 2021 What is ethnography, how does it work, and what does it do?	• Group ethnography exercise	Articles will be assigned individually. FWIS Writing Sample due Jan 31 by 11:59 PM
Week 2	In Class	Reading/Assignment

February 1, 2021 How do you do social media ethnography?	• Guided ethnography of a platform	
February 3, 2021 How does framing influence our actions and opinions?	• Multimedia Reading Diary introduction and signup • Discussion of film	"FYRE: The Greatest Party that Never Happened" Available on Netflix
February 5, 2021 What roles can framing play on social media?	• Discussion of film	"Fyre Fraud" Available on Hulu Guided ethnography write-up and notes due Feb 7 by 11:59 PM
Week 3	In Class	Reading/Assignment
February 8, 2021 Whom are we communicating with on social media?	• Discussion of reading	"Habermas & the Public Sphere." Watch video on Canvas and take notes. "Where I can be myself ...where I can speak my mind": Networked counterpublics in a polymedia environment" by Bryce J. Renninger First multimedia reading diary entries due before class
February 10, 2021 What is it like to be the object of research?	• Guest speaker Chris Duffy: Becoming a Meme • Discussion of reading	"Social Media Users' Views on the Ethics of Social Media Research" by Kelsey Beninger

February 12, 2021 Whose labor is needed to make social media work?	• Guest lecture from Dr. Natalie Troxel, UX researcher at Facebook • Discussion of reading	-"The Human Toll of Protecting the Internet from the Worst of Humanity" by Adrian Chen -"Facebook, Cambridge Analytica Share A Liking For Beta Tests In The Developing World" by Paul Blumenthal First round of field notes due Feb 14 by 11:59 PM
Week 4	In Class	Reading/Assignment
February 15, 2021 What is your preliminary final paper topic?	• Discussion of Paper Topics	
February 17, 2021	NO CLASS	
Unit 2: Identity on Social Media		
February 19, 2021 Which comes first? Labels or identity?	• In-class activity on identity construction	Video: What does it mean that gender is performative? (On Canvas) "Butler's Gender Performativity Explained." from binarythis.com One paragraph final paper topic proposal due Feb 21 at 11:59 PM
Week 5	In Class	Reading/Assignment
February 22, 2021 Who are you and how does it influence your perspective?	• In-class activity on positionality	"Layers of Marginality: An Exploration of Visibility, Impressions, and Cultural Context on Geospatial Apps for Men Who Have Sex With Men in Mumbai, India" by Jeremy Birnholtz et al.

February 24, 2021 How does race influence our social media experiences?	• Discussion of reading	"The Memeification Of Breonna Taylor's Death" by Zeba Blay "All Lives Matter, but so Does Race: Black Lives Matter and the Evolving Role of Social Media" by Nikita Carney
February 26, 2021 How can social media be used to solidify or question gender norms?	• Know Your Meme presentations introduction and signup • Discussion of reading	"Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere" by Debbie Ging Second round of field notes due by Feb 28 at 11:59
Week 6	In Class	Reading/Assignment
March 1, 2021	NO CLASS	
March 3, 2021 How do platform affordances shape our content?	• Introduction to the social model of dis/ability • Discussion of reading	"The thing about pain: The remaking of illness narratives in chronic pain expressions on social media" by Elena Gonzalez-Polledo, Jen Tarr
March 5, 2021 What does it mean to be out online?	• Discussion of reading	"Default publicness: Queer youth of color, social media, and being outed by the machine" by Alexander Cho Know Your Meme presentations begin
Week 7	In Class	Reading/Assignment
March 8, 2021 What effect does visual culture have on our perceptions of others?	• Discussion of reading	"Indigenous Memes and the Invention of a People" by Ryan Frazer, Bronwyn Carlson

March 10, 2021		
What is the role of humor and satire on social media?	• Discussion of reading	"Your Privilege Is Trending: Confronting Whiteness on Social Media" by Theresa L. Petray, Rowan Collin
March 12, 2021		
What is an influencer and what do they influence?	• Discussion of reading	"Aren't These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online?": Influencer Selfies as Subversive Frivolity" by Crystal Abidin Mid-semester Check-in due by March 14 at 11:59 PM
Week 8	In Class	Reading/Assignment
March 15, 2021		
How do I do scholarly research?	• First field note spot-check • Research Workshop	TBD
March 17, 2021		
What makes writing ethnographic?	• Ethnographic Writing Workshop	TBD
March 19, 2021		
How does the offline world interact with the online?	• Discussion of reading	"The spatial self: Location-based identity performance on social media" by Raz Schwartz, Germaine R Halegoua First ethnography draft due March 21 by 11:59 PM
Week 9	In Class	Reading/Assignment
March 22, 2021		
How can we help each other be stronger writers?	• Peer review	
	Unit 3: Navigating Relationships Online	

March 24, 2021		
What is a media ideology and how do they affect our actions?	• Discussion of reading	Introduction and Chapter 1, <i>The Breakup 2.0</i> by Ilana Gershon
March 26, 2021	NO CLASS	
Week 10	In Class	Reading/Assignment
March 29, 2021		
What role does underlying structure play in our media use?	• Second field note spot-check • Discussion of reading	Chapter 2, <i>The Breakup 2.0</i> by Ilana Gershon
March 31, 2021		
What is remediation and where do we see it in our lives?	• Discussion of reading	Chapter 3, <i>The Breakup 2.0</i> by Ilana Gershon
April 2, 2021		
How does second order information shape our perceptions of online interactions?	• Discussion of reading	Chapter 4, <i>The Breakup 2.0</i> by Ilana Gershon Second ethnography draft due April 11 by 11:59 PM
Week 11	In Class	Reading/Assignment
April 5, 2021		
What does 'public' mean and to whom?	• Third field note spot-check • Discussion of reading	Chapter 5 and Conclusion, <i>The Breakup 2.0</i> by Ilana Gershon
	Unit 4: Social Media as a Tool for Activism	

April 7, 2021 What is the role of social media in modern activism and how did it get that way?	• Introduction to social movement theory • Discussion of reading	"Towards Cyberactivism 2.0?: Understanding the Use of Social Media and Other Information Technologies for Political Activism and Social Movements" by Rodrigo Sandoval-Almazan & Ramon J. Gil-Garcia Peer review due on Canvas by April 7 at 11:59PM
April 9, 2021 What makes an effective hashtag?	• Invent a hashtag	
Week 12	In Class	Reading/Assignment
April 12, 2021 How do ideas spread through culture?	• Introduction to coloniality • Discussion of reading	"Native People are #NotYourMascot" (on Canvas) from the <i>There are no Girls on the Internet</i> podcast
April 14, 2021 How can social media shape political subjectivity?	• Writing an abstract • Discussion of reading	"It took me quite a long time to develop a voice": Examining feminist digital activism in the Indian #MeToo movement" by Paromita Pain
April 16, 2021 How can social media foster shared identities?	• Guest Speaker: Cayden Mak, Executive Director at 18 Million Rising • Discussion of reading	"Feeling Asian Together: Coping With #COVIDRacism on Subtle Asian Traits." by Crystal Abidin, Jing Zeng Third ethnography draft WITH ABSTRACT due April 18 by 11:59 PM
Week 13		Reading/Assignment
April 19, 2021 Is social media inherently colonial? Can it be decolonized?	• Discussion of reading	"Technocolonialism: Digital Innovation and Data Practices in the Humanitarian Response to Refugee Crises." by Mirca Madianou

April 21, 2021 What is the role of social media in electoral politics?	• Vetting sources • Discussion of reading	"Information, Opinion, or Rumor? The Role of Twitter During the Post-Electoral Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire." by Tanja Schreiner Peer review due on Canvas by April 21 at 11:59PM
April 23, 2021 What have we learned?	• Wrap-Up	
Week 14	In Class	Reading/Assignment
April 26, 2021	• Final Presentations 1-5 • Peer review	
April 28, 2021	• Final Presentations 6-10 • Peer review	
April 30, 2021	• Final Presentations 11-15 • Peer review	
May 9, 2021	Final paper due on Canvas by 11:59 PM	